

The Holy Spirit and Spirituality

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Lesson #12 for March 25, 2017

Scriptures: John 16:8-11; Romans 5:10; Hebrews 4:15-16; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 5:12-13; Psalm 31:24.

1. We have discussed many aspects of the Holy Spirit's work. In this lesson we will focus on what Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in John 16:8-11. The Holy Spirit has been sent to be a *Parakletos* a Greek word meaning *Helper, Comforter, or Advocate*. As you think about the work of the Holy Spirit, does He intercede with God in an attempt to change God's opinion about us? Or, does He intercede with us to change our opinion about God? Jesus said the Holy Spirit would convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.
2. It is interesting to notice that in 1 John 2:1, Jesus is also called a *Parakletos*. Does that imply that the Holy Spirit has been sent to carry on exactly the same work that Jesus was doing while He was on this earth? The word used to describe the Holy Spirit in John 16 means *another* (of the same kind).
3. In this lesson we will also discuss the assurance of salvation and what guarantees that assurance.
4. What are the implications of saying that the Holy Spirit, following the example of Jesus, is our Helper, Comforter, *Parakletos*, and Friend? Does the Holy Spirit come to convict and condemn us because we are sinners? Or, does He primarily seek to help us recognize our need of the transforming power of God in our lives? We need to see our true condition.
5. Unfortunately, it is often the case that when Christians approach so-called sinners in the world, they often do so with an accusing finger, condemning as they go. But, it has never been our responsibility to condemn or judge anyone. We have never been appointed as judge or judges. That work is left to Someone else! Who is our Judge? Read John 5:22; John 3:17-21; and John 12:47-48. It is very clear from these verses that our only Judge is the truth. Jesus was very clear in His condemnation of those who set themselves up as judges. Consider all the conversations He had with members of the Sanhedrin and especially the Pharisees. Read Romans 2:1 and Matthew 7:3 for evidence that it would be a serious mistake for us to set ourselves up as judges.
6. God has called us not to be prosecutors or judges but to be witnesses of His redeeming power in our own lives. But, we must be very discriminating about what we believe.
7. What does it mean to suggest that the Holy Spirit will convince us of sin? How many of us clearly understand what sin is. There are three verses in the New Testament which define *sin*. The most commonly referred to is 1 John 3:4. That verse says simply that sin is lawlessness or rebelliousness or "transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4, *KJV*) The second verse talks about our behaviors and says that not doing what we know we should do is a sin. (See James 4:17.) But, the most comprehensive definition of *sin* says, "Anything that is not based on faith is sin." (Romans 14:23, *GNB*) In the context of all of the New Testament, we are taught that whatever brings us closer to God is called faith; whatever takes us further away from God and separates us from Him is sin.
8. John 16 is not talking about how the Spirit deals with individual mistakes, transgressions, or sins; it is talking about the basic issue with sin.

Our deepest misery and alienation consists not in our moral imperfection but in our estrangement from God and our refusal to accept the One whom God has sent for the purpose of rescuing us from this condition.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sunday, March 19.

9. In essence, Jesus is saying to us that if we reject the help that God offers us, what more can He

do?

10. So, what is the relationship among the mission of Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, the work of the Holy Spirit, and our salvation? How is the rest of the universe involved?
11. We must not limit the purposes or aims of Jesus's death on the cross.

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated.—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1893, par. 12; *Ibid.* December 22, 1914, par. 4; *The Messenger*, June 7, 1893, par. 5; *Bible Echoes*, July 15, 1893, par. 3; *That I May Know Him* 366.4.

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but **it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe.** To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me.” John 12:31, 32. **The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin.**—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 68.2-69.0 (1890); *Reflecting Christ* 50.3 (1985).

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels.... Not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. **Our little world is the lesson book of the universe.** God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which “angels desire to look,” [1 Peter 1:12] and it will be their study throughout endless ages.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 19.2 (1898); *AG* 45.3; *LDE* 31.1; *OFC* 200.3; *Reflecting Christ* 15.4 (1985).

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, “It is finished,” had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished.... **Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds.** The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 758.3 (1898). [Bold type and content in brackets are added.]

12. The Holy Spirit has been sent not just to convict us of sin and teach us the truth about sin *versus* faith but also to teach us the truth about righteousness. The world in general is no more aware of the truth about righteousness than it is of the truth about sin.
13. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that all our attempts at pleasing God in our own power are nothing more than “filthy rags.” But, if we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives, revealing to us the truth of all that Jesus taught and did, then we can become like Him in character, accepting the righteousness of Jesus Christ on our behalf.
14. Is the Father the One who has to approve of our righteousness before we can enter heaven?

Does that mean that the Father is not as loving as the Son? (John 3:16) Or, does it mean that the Father is our Judge while the Son and the Holy Spirit are our Intercessors or Advocates? To review, John 5:22 says that the Father is not going to judge anyone; He gives all judgment to the Son! And what about John 3:17-21 and John 12:47-48? We each judge ourselves by the way we respond to the Light and Truth.

15. Read Romans 5:10. What is implied by the fact that God wants to make us His friends? Those who are willing to accept God's plan for their lives will be regarded as God's friends—His faithful sons and daughters—and He will welcome them into heaven.
16. By decisively refuting the accusations and answering the questions that have been raised by Satan in the great controversy, Jesus was able to return to His Father triumphantly, having won the great controversy and providing salvation for the entire universe.
17. Many Christians believe that we can only be saved because there are saints including Mary the mother of Jesus and Jesus Himself, pleading her/His own merits on our behalf in heaven. Our Bible study guide states:

... by means of the resurrection, God the Father placed the stamp of His approval upon Jesus' life and redemptive work. Now Jesus lives to intercede for us (*Heb. 4:15, 16*), and He applies the merits of His death in our behalf because we do not have the righteousness needed for salvation.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, March 20.

Does your view of God correlate with that? Or, is that a very forensic view of salvation and God's work and Jesus's mission?

18. How does the resurrection place a stamp of approval on Jesus's work? Did the Father raise Jesus? Or, did Jesus arise in His own power? Is the Father somehow fooled into thinking that Christ's merits are really our merits?

When the voice of the mighty angel was heard at Christ's tomb, saying, Thy Father calls Thee, the Saviour came forth from the grave by the life that was in Himself. Now was proved the truth of His words, "I lay down My life, that I might take it again. . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now was fulfilled the prophecy He had spoken to the priests and rulers, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." John 10:17, 18; 2:19.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 785.2.

19. This is a major point in the great controversy! Why isn't it repeated again and again? There is even minimal mention of this in the writings of Ellen White.
20. In light of Jesus's work which He accomplished not only on our behalf but also on behalf of the entire universe and which is being carried on by the Holy Spirit right now in the lives of His faithful followers, are we getting to know Jesus better and, thus, becoming more like Him each day? If that is the focus of our lives, we will not need to worry about our past sins or about how we can meet the requirements of God's law; it will all come naturally through what the Holy Spirit is doing in us. (See Ephesians 1:8-10; 3:8-10 and Colossians 1:19-20.)
21. But, we must be clear that this is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. It is not something we do by ourselves. Every effort to keep the law in our own power will fail. Only the Holy Spirit can bring about that transformation in our lives.
22. Once again, read John 16:8,11. Is there really good news in the judgment? Do we believe that Jesus has proven that God is the One who has told us the truth about life? The great controversy? The Devil—who was and is the father of lies? (John 8:44) And the truth about sin and its consequences?
23. Our main approach to sinners should not be an attempt to scare them into the truth. You cannot scare "the hell" out of people, literally! It is not our job to convince them of the judgment. We

need to speak the truth about sin and its terrible consequences; but, we need to do so in the context of telling people the truth about salvation.

24. As we mentioned above, John 3:17-21 and 12:47-48 make it very clear that, in fact, we actually judge ourselves based on our responses to the truth. But, in John 16:11, the Holy Spirit through John was not talking about that final judgment. He was speaking about the fact that Satan has already been decisively defeated by Jesus at Calvary.
25. So, on what basis do we know that the Devil has already been judged? What does that mean for us in the great controversy? The mountain of lies that Satan has produced has been overcome by the truth as demonstrated in the life and death of Jesus Christ.
26. Read 1 Peter 5:8-9. How does it make you feel to know that the Devil is going about as a roaring lion? The Devil feels like a trapped or caged lion. He knows that his time is short; but, he is determined to take down as many people as possible with him into destruction.
27. We are told that “the blood of Jesus makes us free.” (John 8:32) But, is it the blood of Jesus that makes us free? Was there something different about His red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets, and/or plasma? How does that freedom come about? Or, is it the meaning of the death of Jesus that teaches us the truth about sin and its consequence—death—and demonstrates once and for all that it is God who has told us the truth. See 1 Corinthians 1:18.
28. As World War II was drawing to a conclusion and Hitler realized that he was losing, he redoubled his efforts so that the last months of World War II were the bloodiest times of all. No wonder we need to be very aware of Satan’s conditions and his goals.
29. The real judgment came when Jesus decisively defeated the Devil at the cross and at the tomb of Joseph. There can be no doubt among those with a clear understanding of the great controversy about Who has been telling us the truth ever since the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:17; 3:1-5) and telling the truth to the rest of the universe ever since even before that.
30. Read 1 John 5:12-13; Romans 8:15-17; and 2 Corinthians 5:5. These verses describe for us what is sometimes referred to as *the assurance of salvation*. What does that mean to you? Think of the changes that take place when a person accepts Jesus as his Savior and welcomes the Holy Spirit into his life. First of all, he is changed from God’s enemy into His friend. (Romans 5:10) He will seek to walk, following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:4)
31. Read Ephesians 1:13-14. How can we know whether or not we have been sealed by the Spirit?

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming (MS 173, 1902).—Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, 1161.6; *LDE* 219.4; *Maranatha* 200.2; *FLB* 287.7; *OFC* 83.6; *Ibid.* 328.2; *1MR* 249.2-250.0; *10MR* 252.1. [Bold type is added.]

32. Christians should not be speaking as if their salvation was in doubt. Christ has already won the great controversy. We should:

Talk courage, talk faith and hope, and you will be all light in the Lord. Keep thinking of the open door that Christ has set before you, that no man can shut. God will close the door to all evil, if you will give him a chance. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up for you a standard against him.—Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 16, 1889, par. 8.

33. Read Romans 5:4-5; 15:13; and 1 Corinthians 13:13. What is the relationship among the work of the Holy Spirit, the love of God, and hope? God’s entire government is based on love. God

Himself is described as love. (1 John 4:8,16) As we look forward to being a part of that government, we can have the greatest hope possible. In fact, we can face whatever might come because we know that even if we were to be martyred, we have an eternal hope and a future life. It was that realization—that hope—which transformed the disciples after resurrection Sunday.

34. Hope is more than just optimism. An optimist just thinks that everything is going to be fine. But, our hope is not just a blind feeling; it is based on solid evidence from Scripture. We can trust God because He has always told the truth, and He was willing to die to prove it. Thus, because we can verify that God has always told us the truth, we can trust in His promises for the future. Without the Holy Spirit to press home the truth to us, we would find it difficult even to believe the good news that comes to us from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
35. In summary, we can say with absolute certainty that the Holy Spirit works harmoniously with God the Father and God the Son to accomplish our salvation. Everything that is required for our salvation is possible through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. The evidence has been laid out in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps us to comprehend the incredible implications of those facts.

In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. **The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail.** The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. **Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power.** It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. **Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.**

Of the Spirit Jesus said, "He shall glorify Me." The Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His love; so the Spirit was to glorify Christ by revealing His grace to the world. **The very image of God is to be reproduced in humanity. The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people.**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 671.2-3. [Bold type is added.]

36. Do you feel comfortable in your understanding of sin *versus* righteousness? Do you understand the implications of Romans 14:23? Do you understand what the assurance of our salvation is based upon? Review once again, these two basic facts: 1) Jesus Christ has already won the great controversy on behalf of God and the entire universe; and 2) If we are willing to take the time to allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to transform us into God's faithful and obedient children, God has promised us an eternity of wonderful times with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and all of the rest of His children throughout the universe.
37. Have you considered the fact that there seems to be a biblical difference between talking about *sin* in the singular—our separation from God—and *sins* in the plural? During these lessons, have you developed a better understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit? What is the Holy Spirit's ultimate goal for our lives? The Holy Spirit wants us to develop an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. He wants us to recognize that sin separates us from God, from life, and from any future hope. But, He also wants us to understand that all of that can be put behind us as we

develop a correct relationship with Jesus Christ.

38. So, why did Jesus say that He would be closer to us if He went away than if He stayed here on this earth?

At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer.—*Ibid.* 669.4-670.0.

39. Try to imagine yourself as one of the disciples during that last week of the life of Jesus on this earth. Try to imagine how they felt as He said that He was going away and they would not be able to go with Him. Then, try to imagine the incredible events of resurrection Sunday. What kind of conversations went on among the disciples during those incredible hours? Then, try to imagine yourself over the next seven weeks up until the time of Pentecost. We are told that the disciples came together in one spirit. So, what did the disciples feel at Pentecost? What transformed Peter from the disciple who cursed and swore because of the accusing finger of a maid into the powerful preacher who was able to stand with conviction before the entire Sanhedrin and accuse them of killing Jesus? (See Acts 4:8-22.) Peter's sermon suddenly led 3,000 to become Christians.
40. Don't we know for sure that the latter rain is going to be given with even more power than was the former rain? What is implied by those words? What could we as Sabbath school class members do to more fully experience the Holy Spirit in our lives?
41. Do you understand the implications of John 16:8-11?

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. **When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.**—*Ibid.* 668.3; *LHU* 178.5; *BLJ* 31.4. [Bold type is added.]

42. Sin is a state of being—a state of existing partially separated from God. It is not just something we do; it is who we are. But, the Holy Spirit is doing everything He possibly can through the power of God to correct that problem. When we compare our lives with the life of Jesus, we recognize that we need help—we need heaven's transforming grace.
43. Thus, we can state with Paul (Romans 8:1, *GNB*): "There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus." Has the realization of those words really convicted you? Do you really believe them? Do you understand what the Holy Spirit wants to do for you as an individual Christian?
44. We can see what the Holy Spirit did for the early disciples; we can have the assurance that He will do even more for us who live in these final days of earth's history. Are we ready?

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